Constructive Sovereignty: A New International Relations Model for an Old Problem

by John Maszka

Introduction

This article asks a rather ambitious question, "What independent variable accounts for America's continued support for Israel?" The question is an ambitious one, not only because of the myriad possibilities and the endless body of literature on the subject, but also because America's seemingly blind support for Israel defies the three standard international relations (IR) models. The realist model, which assumes the state to be the primary actor with fixed preferences and motivated by security and power. Realism emphasizes conflict between states. The liberal model also recognizes the state as the primary actor, but liberalism emphasizes conflict resolution. Finally the constructivist model recognizes individuals as the primary actors. Unlike states, individual's preferences are not fixed, but constantly changing. The role of the state within this model is to represent the preferences of its constituents. It certainly does not take an international relations scholar to recognize that U.S. foreign policy toward Israel has neither emphasized U.S. security and power, conflict resolution, nor the preferences of the people. Rather, it's a schizophrenic foreign policy, in need of a new theoretical lens.

J. David Singer (1961, 78-80) suggests that there are three functions of an analytical model: description, explanation, and prediction. When describing a phenomenon, the goal is to "present as complete and undistorted a picture as is possible." When explaining a phenomenon, which is the primary purpose of theory according to Singer, the goal is to offer a valid and parsimonious explanation of the causal mechanism. It is important that valid explanation be given priority over accurate description if the two are in conflict. Finally, an analytical model should provide for some level of reliable prediction. Singer insists that the most important decision any researcher makes is in matching the research with the proper level of analysis, whether systemic or sub-systemic.

This article chronicles the brief history of U.S.-Israeli relations and roughly categorizes them as efficiently as possible. It begins with the more blatantly constructivist types of influences and interactions and gradually works toward the more blatantly realist official foreign policy decisions made by eleven different presidential administrations toward the independent state of Israel. Many of the decisions and policies of the administrations, however, are clearly (and sometimes not so clearly) grounded, not in realist considerations of security and power, or in liberal considerations of conflict resolution, but in constructivist considerations of personal beliefs and biases, or responses to pressure from others acting out of such motives.

The article concludes by offering a new lens by which we may view U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East: the constructive sovereignty model.

A Common Frame of Reference

Former CIA analyst Kathleen Christison (1999) maintains that even more important than the tremendous influence of the pro-Israel lobby is that Americans have traditionally shared a common biblical view of the Middle East. This deeply-embedded Judeo-Christian heritage created a strong inclination towards favoritism of the Jews in Palestine and derogatory views of the Palestinians. There are a number of commonly held ideas among Americans regarding Israel, as well as Arabs. These stereotypical views hold Israel as a small and heroic, yet peace-loving, *European* democracy surrounded by illiterate, non-European, non-democratic Arabs who are both worthless and warlike (Suleiman, 1995). Accordingly, the Palestinians, who failed to fight for the land in 1948, are neither a distinct nation of people nor are they entitled to the land. In fact, they only want the land now to keep the Jews from having it (Kurzman, 1972). This rationale further suggests that the Jews should rightfully possess the land because they only have one nation, but the Arabs have many (Christison, 1987).

This common frame of reference has evolved slowly for more than two centuries. Beginning with the Crusades, and extending through the "Great Game" in the early nineteenth century in which Victorian Britain competed with Tsarist Russia for control of vital natural resources, stereotypical perceptions were further reinforced by the strong colonial notions of the era (Johnson, 2006). Historians, geographers, missionaries and others began writing about their journeys to Palestine and their impressions of the people who lived there (Morgan, 1973). Works by famous novelists, such as Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, also greatly contributed to the common frame of reference of Arabs as backward and Jews as progressive; as did movies which were becoming more popular at the time (Christison, 1997). As clashes erupted between Jews and Arabs and Arab nationalism exploded after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, it seemed only natural that Americans identified with the Jews over the Arabs (Christison, 1988).

The slaughter of roughly six million Jews during World War II elicited strong sympathy and support for the need of a Jewish homeland, as was articulated in the emerging Holocaust Theology (see for example Wiesel, 1968; Wiesel, 1970). Furthermore, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the beginning of the Cold War spawned a generation of books and movies that reinforced the classic stereotype of Arabs who preyed on innocent Jews (Christison, 1997). The Arab/Nazi comparison was further strengthened by the 1961 trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann due to the fact that during the trial the Israeli prosecution repeatedly tried to establish links between Eichmann and Haj Amin al-Husayni, the notorious Palestinian leader of the 1930s and 1940s (Segev, 1993; Evensen, 1992). The 1967 War solidified this image of Arabs as Nazis in the western psyche, as the war was seen as an attempt to exterminate Israel; as was the 1973 Yom Kippur war, also seen as an attempt at a second holocaust (Herzog, 1975).

Even after the 1975 U. N. General Assembly resolution that characterizes Zionism as a form of racism, the popular stereotype persisted. More surprisingly, even after the 1982 Lebanon war, the popular stereotype lived on even in the face of the hypocrisy of a Jewish democracy that ruled over a large population of non-Jews in a very non-democratic fashion. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, Israel's status as regional hegemon and strategic ally of the United States was again reinforced by September 11, 2001 and the global war on terrorism (Hoffman, 2004).

As already implicitly spelled out, this common frame of reference has translated into a conventional wisdom that has impacted the way most American policymakers view the Middle East (Spiegel, 1985). This conventional wisdom casts Israel as a strategic asset and America's only reliable ally in the region. It casts the Arab nations as non-democratic and not so strategically important to the United States. And since the adoption of UN Resolution 242, conventional wisdom implicitly casts the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as a terrorist organization not to be negotiated with, particularly not without its acceptance of the right of Israel to exist. Finally, and until quite recently, conventional wisdom casts the establishment of an independent

Palestinian state as a perpetual "back-burner" issue not to be taken too seriously until both sides in the conflict were "ripe" to the idea (Churba, 1980; Peck, 1984).

In the words of Ronald Reagan, "Israel is the only stable democracy we can rely on in a spot where Armageddon could come" (Ronald Reagan, quoted by Wolf Blitzer, 1985. Reprinted in Christison, 1988). Bifurcation of Jews and Palestinians in this way allowed the United States to feasibly ignore the stateless Palestinians for over a century. By failing to address the true nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, U.S. policymakers were able to avoid dealing with the Palestinian dislocation and subsequent claim to the land (Neff, 1994). The Palestinians' eventual frustration over being ignored erupted into violence in the first intifada and acts of terrorism, which only further cemented the stereotypical view of Palestinians in the minds of most Americans (Victoroff, 2006)

Lobbying Groups

Membership in pro-Israel groups started out modest, reaching around 20,000 just prior to World War I (WWI), but spiked to nearly 200,000 during the war, and then dropped back down to about 18,000 in 1929 (Gross, 1983). Even in these earlier years during WWI, the young pro-Israel lobby was able to influence crucial U.S. foreign policy decisions, such as passing a joint congressional resolution favoring the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine.

The pro-Israel lobby was also effective in influencing Woodrow Wilson's decision to support the 1917 Balfour Declaration, even after receiving the King-Crane Commission report evidencing that the implementation of Balfour violated Wilson's principle of self-determination (Ahmed, 1995). The lobby was also able to influence much of the press regarding the issue, despite a considerable amount of anti-Semitism in the United States during the 1920s (Davidson, 1994).

Given that there were no effective pro-Arab lobbying efforts being conducted at the time, no influential bloc of Arab-American voters, and no media influences promoting Arabs or Arab culture, the pro-Israel lobby was able to exert its influence rather effortlessly. In fact, it would not be until 1945 that the Arab Information Office opened in Washington. It would take much longer for Arab-Americans to begin to organize effectively (Christison, 1997).

Franklin Delano Roosevelt continued in the mindset of Wilson in regard to the question of a Jewish statehood in Palestine; strongly believing that it was the right thing to do (Gross, 1983). What is somewhat surprising, in light of the fact that Roosevelt has been criticized for not doing enough to help the Jews during the Holocaust, is that he surrounded himself with a large number of Jewish advisors and insiders (Goodwin, 1994).

The pro-Israel lobby had ready access to the Oval Office during his administration. Roosevelt often engaged in open discussions with pro-Israel supporters on such decisive issues as the wholesale transfer of hundreds of thousands of Arabs from Palestine elsewhere in order to make room for Jewish immigrants who were arriving in large numbers due to Hitler's rise to power in Germany (Gross, 1983). It was during the Roosevelt administration that Zionist organizations multiplied as the news of the Holocaust fueled their membership and their overall influence on American thought and perspective (Tivnan, 1988). By the end of World War Two (WWII), 80 percent of all Americans surveyed reported to have consumed some form of pro-Israel information, and about half responded that they had actively followed the news regarding Palestine (Evensen, 1992).

Yet another milestone in the history of the pro-Israel lobby was reached during the Truman administration. Membership passed the one million mark and lobbying efforts extended beyond Washington and the national media to local venues. Support for the pro-Israel lobby also greatly

expanded during the Truman era to include every category from local business owners to movie stars and other celebrities (Cohen, 1990; Gross, 1983; Wilson, 1979).

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), by far the most noteworthy organization in the pro-Israel lobby today, is "so pervasive at the White House as well as in Congress that it is impossible to ascertain where lobby pressure ends and independent presidential thinking begins." The organization's pressure is so implicit that "certain actions are known to be anathema to the pro-Israel lobby … and so they do not even enter into policy considerations. Lobby pressures are an inextricable part of presidential strategy" (Christison, 1988, 50). Lobby pressure had become so inextricable by the time of the Reagan administration that according to William Quandt, "the Reagan administration has elevated AIPAC to the level of a player in this game" (personal interview with Quandt quoted in Christison, 1988, 50).

The Reagan administration not only negotiated with AIPAC on arms sales to Arab states, it relied on AIPAC for help with other pending legislation such as to help it obtain a mandate to keep the Marines in Lebanon when Congress wanted to invoke the War Powers Act to pull them out in 1983 (Gwertzman, 1984; Blitzer, 1985). The administration also negotiated with AIPAC in September 1987 regarding the State Department's decision to close the Palestinian Information office in Washington (Christison, 1988). As a result of its elevation in status, AIPAC quadrupled its budget during the years of the Reagan administration, dramatically increased its access to Congress, and even began to evaluate cabinet appointments (Shipler, 1987; Dine, 1987).

Presidential Administrations

It essentially took roughly thirty years for the United States to seriously begin to recognize the Palestinians. For much of the Cold War, the United States clung to the image of Palestinians as terrorists and proxies of the Soviet Union. From the establishment of Israel as an independent state in 1948 to the rise of the Carter administration in 1977, U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East was centered on Israel as a strategic cold war ally, and the realist perspective of only acknowledging Arab *states*—not the stateless Palestinians. It would take another decade before the first Bush administration involved the Palestinians directly in the peacemaking process (Christison, 1999).

Truman

April 12, 1945 – January 20, 1953

Harry S. Truman was a self-proclaimed bible scholar (Benson, 1999). While Truman was a product of American culture, he seemed less enamored by the Jewish stereotypes and often struggled with his own anti-Semitism. Still, claiming to possess a wealth of knowledge on both Jews and Arabs, Truman strongly favored the establishment of an independent Jewish state on the land that had remained undeveloped for so long under the occupation of the Palestinians (Bain, 1979). In fact, one of Truman's earliest official acts as President in 1945 was to recommend to Britain that 100,000 Jews be allowed to immigrate to Palestine (Truman, 1956).

Truman was keenly aware of both sides of the argument. Then Director of Near East Affairs Loy Henderson was particularly concerned about the possibly negative impact that U.S. support of an independent Jewish state could exert on foreign relations with key Arab states (Painter, 1986; Stoff, 1980). Another matter of national interest was one of national security. And although Secretary of State George Marshall was strongly opposed to allying the United States with the hopelessly surrounded, fledgling new Israeli state, Truman ultimately decided to stand behind Israel (Rubin, 1980).

The most common explanation for Truman's decision to back Israel is that he was deeply impressed by the horror of the Holocaust, and that's ultimately what tipped the scales (Cohen, 1990). But one cannot rule out the influence of the pro-Israel lobby and pro-Israel supporters in Truman's inner circle such as Clark Clifford, David Niles and Max Lowenthal (Clifford, 1991). Close Jewish friends such as Eddie Jacobson also played a crucial role in Truman's policy decisions (McCullough, 1992).

What makes Truman's decision to support the partition of Palestine in 1947 and to officially extend diplomatic recognition to Israel in May of 1948 so critical, is that by doing so, he set the precedent that every U.S. administration would follow thereafter (Neff, 1995). By giving his blessing to displacing the Palestinians, Truman set the stage for future administrations' regarding the Arab-Israel conflict. The U.S. willingness to acknowledge *states* alone, and not the stateless Palestinians, would continue to bias U.S. foreign policy toward Israel until the Bush administration. This policy was first voiced publicly by John Foster Dulles following the 1948 conflict in Palestine. The most central players in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinians, did not even officially exist in U.S. foreign policy; nor did they have an official name beyond "Arab refugees" in the State Department (Christison, 1998).

Eisenhower

January 20 1953 – January 20, 1961

Dwight D. Eisenhower did not share the same biblical frame of reference for Israel as Truman, Roosevelt or Wilson. Nor was he motivated by a sense of the appropriateness of a Jewish state in Palestine. Eisenhower did carry forward the official U.S. policy of only politically acknowledging states as articulated in 1948 by Dulles, now his secretary of state. However his dealings with states seems to have been considerably more even-handed than his predecessors, as he apparently had no aversion to taking a no-nonsense approach with Israel (Eban, 1992).

For instance, in 1953 he insisted that Israel immediately stop its diversion of the head waters of the Jordan River, using economic pressure to force Israel's hand. This action tied directly into Eisenhower's support for the Johnston Plan, an unsuccessful strategy for developing the Jordan River valley in order to make resettlement of Arab refugees more feasible (Reguer, 1993; Sherman, 1999).[1] Eisenhower also "stands out as the only president who ever exerted heavy pressure on the Jewish state for a territorial withdrawal" (Christison, 1999, 96). When Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt in the 1956 war, Eisenhower insisted that Israel surrender the Peninsula (Bard, 2008).

For more than a year, the Eisenhower administration's position included threats to discontinue all U.S. assistance to Israel, UN sanctions, expulsion from the UN itself, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' prohibition of any U.S. diplomats visiting Israeli officials in Jerusalem during that period (Bregman, 2002). The Eisenhower administration's insistence that Israel surrender the Sinai Peninsula was motivated by a complex web of foreign policy issues,[2] but Eisenhower's cold war concerns for the balance of power in the region were still tempered by the growing U.S. affinity toward Israel. Ultimately, *before* Israel evacuated Sharm al-Sheikh, the Eisenhower administration assured Israel of free passage through the Suez Canal and sponsored a UN resolution which created the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) to ensure free passage was maintained (Owen, 2001; Arnstein, 2001; Hyam, 2006;).

Kennedy

January 20, 1961 – November 22, 1963

John F. Kennedy continued the U.S. policy of politically acknowledging Arab states but not the stateless Palestinians. He reached out to Arab leaders and expressed his sympathy with Arab nationalism, promising to diligently work toward a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Little, 1988). Kennedy was also a champion of the Palestinian resettlement/repatriation initiative spearheaded by the president of the Carnegie Endowment, Joseph Johnson. However the initiative failed to a large degree due to the very politics that created the problem. Also, it should be noted that Palestinians were not present at the negotiations (Bustami, 1995).

But there is no sense of the even-handedness that was evidenced in the Eisenhower administration. Kennedy clearly showed favor to Israel over the Arab states. The Kennedy administration broke a fifteen-year embargo on military aid to the region with its approval of the sale of Hawk antiaircraft missiles to Israel (Spiegel, 1985). Kennedy also marked a new turning point in U.S.-Israeli relations by setting the precedent of allowing Israel's nuclear program to go unsanctioned (Melman & Raviv, 1994). Kennedy was the first United States president to speak of a special relationship between the United States and Israel (Spiegel, 1985), and he was also the first to appoint a full-time staffer to AIPAC (Christison, 1998).

Johnson

November 22, 1963 – January 20, 1969

Lyndon B. Johnson nurtured an even warmer relationship with Israel, and in the process, greater hostility toward the Arab states. His administration was marked overall by a complete indifference toward the Palestinians (Peretz, 1972). The Johnson administration never launched a single policy initiative on behalf of the Palestinian refugees, nor did it extend political recognition to the newly-formed PLO, which had recently been headed by Yasir Arafat and clearly mapped out a political agenda. Neither did Johnson have any desire to extend his hand in friendship to the nationalist Arab leaders (Bustami, 1995). This was particularly due to the Cold War climate combined with the Viet Nam war and a pervasive anti-Nasser attitude which predominated much of the Johnson era (Parker, 1993). While steadily increasing financial and diplomatic support for Israel, the Johnson administration also opened the Oval Office to pro-Israel supporters while simultaneously ignoring Israel's occupation of Jerusalem and the festering Palestinian refugee problem (Christison, 1998).

Johnson was close personal friends with Ephraim Evron, the second in command at the Israeli embassy in Washington. Johnson also had close personal relations with a number of other powerful Washington pro-Israel supporters including Abe Fortas, Arthur Goldberg, Walt Rostow, and Eugene Rostow. Finally, Johnson's speech writers, John Roche and Ben Wattenberg, were also strong pro-Israel supporters. The large entourage of pro-Israel supporters with whom Johnson surrounded himself enjoyed regular access to the president and pressed their views upon him openly. Their influence would have tremendous impact on Johnson's decisions concerning the Six-Day War, the USS Liberty incident, the 1967 land for peace deal as spelled out in UN Resolution 242, and the sale of advanced military weaponry to Israel (Quandt, 1993; Neff, 1988; Tivnan, 1988; Spiegel, 1985; Christison, 1998).

The Johnson administration fully supported Israel throughout the Six-Day War in 1967 (Oren, 2003). The administration responded with patience and understanding when the USS Liberty was attacked by Israeli air and sea forces, killing 34 and wounding some 170 others. Israel claimed it was an error; however several investigations concluded otherwise (Clifford, 1991; Baylis, 1999; Bamford, 2001). The 1967 land for peace deal as spelled out in UN Resolution 242 is intentionally worded with such ambiguous terminology that it basically allows for the conflict to be resolved by the balance of power in the region rather than by clearly defined precepts. It has become the perpetual U.S. template for peace in the Middle East and has been use by Israel to stall, steal and ultimately stifle criticism of its illegal actions in the disputed territories (Quandt, 1993; Neff, 1988; Christison, 1998).

The administration's legacy, however, was Johnson's approval of the sale of tanks and America's then most advanced fighter jet to Israel, the F-4 warplane. This set an entirely new precedent in U.S.-Israeli relations which went even further beyond the Kennedy administration's willingness to provide Israel with *defensive* military hardware. Johnson had committed the United States to providing Israel with state of the art attack weaponry (Christison, 1998 & 1999).

Nixon

January 20, 1969 – August 9, 1974

Richard M. Nixon initially took a neutral stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1969, Secretary of State William Rogers outlined a peace agreement in the Rogers Plan, but the realpolitik of National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger proved more aligned with the political climate of the day. As the Cold War dominated more and more of the Nixon administration's foreign policy decisions, neither Nixon, nor Rogers, nor Kissinger took much interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Gazit, 1983).

However, by the time Kissinger became secretary of state in 1973, the administration took a hard-line, pro-Israel position. Israel was seen as a strategic American ally necessary for containing Soviet aggression, and the Arab states were viewed as Soviet belligerents. This change in policy was due in part to Kissinger's personal affinity with Israel (Tivnan, 1988). It was also undoubtedly due to Israel's willingness to intervene in the Jordan civil war in 1970 on America's behalf. Nixon wanted to control the outcome without getting the United States directly involved (Nixon, 1978).

Aid to Israel increased from $30 million in 1970 to $500 million in 1973. It skyrocketed to $2.2 billion due to the 1973 October war. (Rabinovich, 2005; Kerr, 1980). While Kissinger wanted to utilize Israel as a proxy in the Cold War, his strategy of stalemate in the Arab-Israeli conflict testified to the fact that he was not concerned with the local/regional issues, but with the larger Cold War context (Kissinger, 1979).

The Nixon administration continued the precedent of refusing to officially acknowledge the stateless Palestinians. As with all presidential administrations, the Nixon administration owned its own little piece of the rock. In 1973, the PLO was recognized as the official representative of the Palestinian people and it was admitted into the Arab League (Aburish, 1998). On November 13, 1974, Yasir Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly; he was the first ever representative of a non-governmental organization to do so. He officially accepted the existence of Israel on behalf of the Palestinians and expressed the PLO's desire to enter into peace negotiations. Kissinger flatly refused to believe that Arafat was sincere and that the PLO was capable of maintaining a politically moderate position toward Israel (Kissinger, 1979)

Ford

August 9, 1974 – January 20, 1977

Very little changed during Gerald R. Ford's short tenure in office. In fact, the transition from Nixon to Ford was hardly perceptible as the Middle East was concerned. The Ford administration continued the trend, under Kissinger's guidance, of heavily arming Israel and completely ignoring the Palestinians. With Sinai II, however, the Ford administration did up the ante a bit by officially prohibiting itself and future administrations from negotiating with the PLO unless it *both* accepted UN Resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist. (Atherton, 1984; Israeli, 1985).

Recall that the PLO had already expressed its acceptance of Israel at the UN General Assembly. Now it had to be willing to accept an ambiguous land agreement as well. As mentioned above, in Kissinger's mind, this was highly unlikely to happen, and even if it did, it would most certainly be

disingenuous. So, under the auspices of Sinai II, any call to enter into discussions by the PLO were immediately quashed due to the administration's 1975 vow not to negotiate with the PLO unless it fully acknowledged Israel's right to existence and UN Security Council Resolution 242. Or, should the PLO meet these terms, talks would simply be quashed due to Kissinger's desire not to negotiate with the PLO (Stein, 2007).

Carter

January 20, 1977 – January 20, 1981

James E. Carter challenged the conventional wisdom regarding the Middle East to some degree, but even Carter was not willing to be the champion of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (Aruri, 1995). To Carter's credit, he took the Palestinian issue more seriously than his predecessors, and he understood it to be central to the greater Arab-Israeli conflict. Carter's approach was the exact opposite of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, which relied on a third party mediator. Unlike Kissinger, Carter liked to deal directly with *everyone* involved (Vance, 1983).

Carter's foreign policy team was also very different from those of his immediate predecessors, Ford and Nixon. Both Carter's secretary of state, Cyrus Vance and his national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski favored including Palestinians in the peace negotiations. Brzezinski had also coauthored a Brookings Institute report, along with Quandt, which advocated for Palestinian self-determination (Christison, 1998). Unfortunately, like those before him, Carter relied too heavily on the intelligence and advice provided by Israel. This is understandable considering the spate of highly-publicized terrorist incidents and the fact that Carter admittedly knew very little about the Middle East when he became president (Carter, 1982).

Carter essentially followed Israel's lead.[3] This over-reliance on Israel was also the main reason for several strategic mistakes committed by the Nixon administration, such as not foreseeing the events leading up to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and afterwards believing that Anwar Sadat was both willing and able to lead other Arab leaders to the negotiating table (Heikal, 1975). Carter's reliance on Israel (and to some extent Sadat) resulted in him ultimately deserting the Palestinians at the Camp David summit when it became clear that negotiations were not going as he had hoped (For more in depth background on the peace process see Bregman, 2002; Saunders, 1985; Sadat, 1978; Christison, 1988 & 1999).

For all their efforts, Carter and his foreign policy team were ultimately defeated by the conventional wisdom that prevailed. The Ford administration's commitment to Sinai II had succeeded in tying their hands and freeing Israel's. A reality that was only exacerbated with the election of Menachem Begin, who was only too happy to exploit Israel's liberty under Sinai II with his vision of a Greater Israel. Settlements began to multiply under Begin, even though the U.S. State Department's legal division labeled the settlements illegal. By the end of Carter's term, he had accomplished very little lasting change in U.S. foreign policy toward Israel (Quandt, 1986).

Reagan

January 20, 1981 – January 20, 1989

Consistency has not been a hallmark of this administration's policy on the Middle East. The administration began with a policy of "strategic consensus," dropped it, formulated a peace plan, dropped it, sent a marine force to Lebanon, pulled it out, returned it as a peacekeeping contingent, converted it to a belligerent, allowed Israel to lead the United States into Lebanon, declared Lebanon to be America's greatest concern in the Middle East, and ignored it after American troops were no longer there. It agreed with Israel that Syria would withdraw from Lebanon,

castigated Syria when it refused, scolded Israel for major infractions of formal agreements and informal understandings, rewarded Israel with a strategic cooperation agreement and designation as a major non-NATO ally, pulled the U.S. ambassador out of Syria, sent him back, declared Iran to be a terrorist state, sold arms to Iran, and refused to sell arms to Jordan. This is not the record of an administration with a good idea of where it is going or a full understanding of the realities of the Middle East (Christison, 1988, 47-8).

According to Christison (1988), the Reagan administration took American foreign policy back to the 1970s pre-Carter era. Other than former Secretary of State Alexander Haig's "strategic consensus," the early Reagan administration lacked any clear policy whatsoever beyond Reagan's staunch anti-communism and his administration's pro-Israel ideology. This was a happy marriage, however. Reagan's anti-communism facilitated AIPAC's goals rather well, as Libya, Syria and the Palestinians were all previously aligned with the former Soviet Union (Ma'Oz 1995).

Later, in July 1982 when George Schultz replaced Haig as secretary of state, he was heavily criticized by pro-Israel supporters because of his business contacts in the Arab world developed during his years as president of Bechtel, a large, international engineering firm. In September 1982, Schultz released the Reagan Plan which advocated for the rights of the Palestinians. However, Israel flatly opposed the plan, so it never amounted to much (Shiff and Ya'ari, 1984). Schultz was ultimately silenced by the Reagan administration's pro-Israel, neo-conservative core, which like so many administrations before it, propped up Israel as a beleaguered democracy bravely facing the evil empire and its Arab puppet-states (Hadar, 1991).

The Reagan administration's pro-Israel, anti-communist position further supported the belief that the containment of communism was the United States' first priority in the Middle East, and that Israel was America's bastion of defense against Soviet aggression in the immediate region. Anthony Cordesman (1984, 979) stressed the folly of this bipolar perspective calling strategic cooperation with Israel "militarily purposeless and hopelessly unstable without an Arab-Israeli peace." Rather than simply ignore the Palestinians, the Reagan administration took an openly hostile attitude toward Palestinian nationalism and spent a great deal of its energy cooperating with Israel to undermine the PLO. Far from even attempting to rein in Israel's rampant settlement activity, the Reagan administration ignored the settlements or worse, advocated for Israel's right to build them (Peck, 1984).

Bush I

January 20, 1989 – January 20, 1993

In August 1989, former CIA official Graham Fuller authored what's now known as the Fuller Report. It was significant as it described the new situation on the ground following the first intifada. Fuller's assessment? A Palestinian state on the West Bank is "inevitable' (p. v). This broke the mold of conventional thinking at the time. George H. W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker also broke the mold on the long-established precedent of completely focusing on Israel by simply ignoring the stateless Palestinians. Entering office at a time when the political milieu advocated maintaining the status quo, Baker was initially very cautious about rocking the boat. But the Bush administration was also very cool to the "special relationship" that supposedly existed between Israel and the United States; it was also cool towards AIPAC (Friedman, 1990).

Because Bush was elected with only 29 percent of the Jewish vote, the administration was viewed as indifferent to AIPAC and Israel (Newhouse, 1990). The relationship between Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir grew even cooler after an April 1989 meeting when Shamir broke his commitment to ease up on settlement construction (Dowd and Friedman, 1990). The Bush administration applied pressure equally on both sides. It called on Israel to end the settlements, give up the idea of a Greater Israel, and embrace the Palestinians as human beings

with political rights. It called on the Palestinians to end the intifada and amend the PLO charter. But the administration remained opposed to an independent Palestinian state (Christison, 1994).

The settlement issue became the issue of contention in early 1990 when Shamir outright lied to Bush regarding the number of settlers being housed in East Jerusalem. The situation went unresolved, primarily due to the Gulf War. However, after the war, Bush enjoyed unprecedented popularity and decided that the time was right to face Israel head on over the settlement issue. The Bush administration decided to convene a peace conference and force Israel to stop settlement construction or risk losing $10 billion in housing loan guarantees (Dowd and Friedman, 1990).

Baker became the first U.S. politician to officially negotiate directly with the Palestinians and hold a peace conference that the Palestinians attended (Christison, 1994). The Madrid Conference, held in October 1991, paved the way for the September 1993 Oslo Accords (Dershowitz, 2003). While Baker is normally credited with the accomplishment, Bush and Baker collaborated so closely on their Middle East foreign policy agenda that it's truly difficult not to credit one as well as the other (Dowd and Friedman, 1990).

The Bush administration has been criticized for not opposing the settlements sooner. It has also been criticized for not enforcing a tougher stance on Israel when it had the chance. Shamir was voted out of office in June 1992 and replaced by Rabin. The Bush administration agreed to allow Rabin to complete the 11,000 units already under construction. Bush also agreed to allow for additional construction as needed to accommodate natural growth, and for construction in security areas (Christison, 1994). Basically, the administration took Israel to the mat, won, and then failed to exercise its victory. Bush also lost the 1992 election. Most attribute the defeat to Bush's alienation from AIPAC and the Jewish voting bloc. Whatever the Bush administration's weaknesses or failures, it was able to change the status quo to include Palestinians as participants in the peace process. Israel's long decades of stalling were finally over. Or were they?

Clinton

January 20, 1993 – January 20, 2001

Bill Clinton completed the process of reversal that began toward the end of the Bush administration. All of the progress the first Bush administration made toward an Arab-Israeli peace agreement was lost, with one exception—the Oslo Accords. Under the Clinton administration, settlements were no longer considered illegal as they once were under the Carter administration.[4] They certainly wouldn't be opposed as under the Bush administration (Twing, 1997).

The 1993 Oslo Accords were the first face-to-face agreement between Israel and the official political representative of the Palestinians, the PLO. The Oslo Accords were a start. But much like Resolution 242, Oslo left too much to be decided by the balance of power, which of course, meant Israel. This is exactly what happened, and Israel enjoys the upper hand to this day. The same criticism can be offered for Oslo 2 in 1995, as is evidenced by the frustration that finally erupted into violence in the al-Aqsa intifada of 2000 (Rabinovich, 2004).

Clinton courted AIPAC and the Jewish vote to the point of calling for the elimination of all UN resolutions that condemned Israel. Clinton's blatant favoritism toward Israel also attempted to justify the administration's failure to acknowledge or support the Palestinian refugees' right to return as outlined in UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Given the pro-Israel political milieu, the failure of the Camp David II negotiations to produce any substantive results was no surprise (Andoni, 1997).

The Clinton administration's clear policy objective with Israel was to go back to the previous frame of reference that focused entirely on Israel largely by ignoring the Palestinians. Yet for all the Clinton administration's special treatment to Israel, the Jewish state's withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000 seemed an augur that its influence in the region was on the wane (Christison, 1999).

Bush II

January 20, 2001 – Present

Huge changes that greatly impacted Israel took place during the George W. Bush administration's two terms in office. First and foremost, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed the face of U.S. foreign relations dramatically and reinforced Israel's special status in the Middle East. The Arab League called for a comprehensive peace with Israel in 2002 at the Beirut summit, and again in Riyadh in 2007, but received no reply. In the interim Israel invaded Lebanon in the summer of 2006, launched the five-year, $60 billion Tefen 2012 military improvement plan, and conducted Operation Orchard—an air strike against al-Kibar—an allegedly secret nuclear plant in the Deir ez-Zor region of Northern Syria (Stephens, 2007; Beaumont, 2007; Weitz, 2007).

Hezbollah and Hamas, both recognized by the United States as terrorist organizations and labeled puppets of Iran, became elected state actors. More recently, in June 2007 Hamas took over Gaza and in May 2008 Hezbollah took over Beirut and other areas in Lebanon. While Hezbollah is Shia and Hamas is Sunni, both were democratically elected to represent their respective constituents, both are denied official acknowledgment by the United States government, and both are vehemently opposed to Israeli occupation of Palestine and Lebanon, and the U.S. occupation of Iraq. These and the many other events that took place have only served to secure Israel's position via the United States and its foreign policy toward the Arab and Muslim states.

A number of issues that are not so new are also impacting U.S. foreign relations in the Middle East. Prior to the 1967 war, Israel had already extracted enough plutonium to contemplate a nuclear test on its Arab neighbors. By 1985, Iran was modeling its nuclear program after Pakistan's P-1 centrifuge design. As of 2004, Israel still refused to disclose its nuclear capacity to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but it continued to receive huge amounts of military and financial assistance from the United States. Iran, on the other hand, continues to be sanctioned to this day for its nuclear ambitions (Jorfi, 1994; Newkirk, 2008).

It is now common knowledge that Israel has a cache of nuclear weapons and Iran is on the verge of becoming a nuclear power. This realization has spurred a new arms race in the region, with a number of states seeking nuclear parity with Israel. The Bush administration has scrambled to both take advantage of these opportunities and still placate Israel's concerns at the same time. The result has been a ten-year, $20 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman. The arms package was a prelude to the November 2007 Annapolis conference aimed at advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace. To alleviate Israel's military concerns, the United States increased its military package to Israel to $30 billion over the next ten years. Meanwhile, Israel has become the fourth largest weapons exporter in the world (larger than Great Britain) with its primary markets in China and India (Fair, 2007).

Ironically India, which has the largest number of Shia Muslims after Iran, entertains age old ties with the Iranian Republic. The end of the Cold war, and subsequent events, led to new opportunities for rapprochement between the two states. Broadly, India views Iran as an Islamic state that can temper Pakistan's anti-India rhetoric, while Iran sees India as a foothold into the West. More specifically, India sees Iran as a major source of future energy (Iran has the fourth largest oil reserves and the second largest reserve of natural gas), and its only viable passage to

the Central Asian republics. Iran, in return, sees India as a major military supplier and the key to improving Iran's transportation infrastructure. The two states have signed a number of agreements: the Transit of Goods signed in 1997 with Turkmenistan, the North-South International Transportation Corridor agreement signed in 2000 with Russia, an agreement to cooperate on the development of a new port complex at Chah Bahar, a 2003 joint working group on terrorism and security, and another agreement (reportedly signed in January 2003) allowing India the use of Iranian military bases should war break out between India and Pakistan (Mohan, 2006).

The obvious security conflict for the United States is that on the one hand, the United States is imposing sanctions against Iran for nuclear noncompliance. Yet on the other hand, the United States winked at Israel's nuclear noncompliance and continues to deliver huge military packages to Israel even though Israel is selling arms to India, India is selling arms to Iran, and Iran is allegedly selling arms to Syria.[5] Likewise, Israel is selling arms to China, and China is both selling ballistic and cruise missile technology to Iran and helping it develop its nuclear program. Another obvious economic conflict is that by indirectly supplying arms to India and Iran, the United States is not only intensifying competition for Central Asia's oil reserves, but it is also creating competition in the arms sales market. Politically, the conflict exists for India, which walks on egg shells trying to nurture its relations with Iran and Central Asia without jeopardizing its critical connection to the United States. Interestingly, however, no apparent pressure has been applied to Israel over its arms sales to India. (Lappin, 2008 see also Pant, 2004 & 2002; Chubin, 1994; Brzezinski, 1997; Herzig, 1995).

A Schizophrenic Foreign Policy

> "America and Israel have a special friendship. In fact, it's more than a friendship. America and Israel are brothers and sisters in the family of democracy, natural allies—natural allies in the cause of peace."

> *Governor George W. Bush, May, 22, 2000*

While George Bush considers Israel a democracy, many point out that it is a racist democracy at best, if it is a democracy at all. Ilan Pappe (2006:6-8) contends that the "expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from what became Israel in 1948" was nothing less than the crime of ethnic cleansing. He argues that the Dalet Plan (code-named Plan D) meets the definition of ethnic cleansing, which includes "the deliberate use of artillery and snipers against the civilian populations of the big cities" and "the forced movement of civilian populations [entailing] the systematic destruction of homes, the looting of personal property, beatings, selective and random killings, and massacres."

Plan D called for the systematic and forcible removal of Palestinians from their homeland. Measures included "large-scale intimidation; laying siege to and bombarding villages and population centers; setting fire to homes, properties, and goods; expelling residents; demolishing homes; and finally, planting mines in the rubble to prevent the expelled inhabitants from returning." Once complete, Plan D displaced greater than 50 percent of the Palestinian population, completely destroyed 531 villages and forcibly evicted the inhabitants of 11 urban communities. Pappe denies any claim that the war crimes committed against the Palestinian people were mere unfortunate consequences of the war. Quite on the contrary, Pappe's argument spells out how the Dalet Plan was very carefully planned and executed; only after which on May 15, 1948, in an effort to stop the ethnic cleansing, Arab neighbors sent in their armies.

Likewise, Virginia Tilley (2005:132) argues for a more democratic solution. According to Tilley, the current situation "remains unworkable because it was flawed from the start, resting on the discredited idea—on which political Zionism stakes all its moral authority—that any ethnic group

can legitimately claim permanent formal dominion over a territorial state." Tilley compares the more than 178 settlements and nearly 400,000 settlers (as of 2005) to cases of ethnic nationalism in South Africa and Northern Ireland.

In addition to Israel's alleged status as a democracy, its status as a peaceful and beleaguered state, whose security is integral to U.S. interests in the Middle East, is also commonly cited as a reason for continued U.S. support of Israel. It's not difficult, however, to understand the resentment many Muslim states harbor regarding America's foreign policy toward Israel. In most Muslim countries, the "populations are angry with the United States over a perceived double-standard regarding its long-standing support for Israel at the expense of Palestinians" (Cronin, 2006:82). Rather than promoting stability in this volatile region, U.S. foreign policy toward Israel continues to incite turmoil.

For decades the United States opposed Israeli settlement in the West Bank, terming the settlements illegal; yet in all that time the United States never demanded that Israel refrain from colonizing the West Bank as a condition for receiving U.S. economic and military aid. Washington continued to bankroll Israel at a higher per capita rate than any other country in the world, a level that has been indispensable to Israel, providing aid over the years that now totals well over $100 billion in today's dollars (Betts, 2006:389).

This double standard applies to more than just total dollars allocated in various forms of aid, and the conditions upon which Israel receives them. It also applies to nuclear development programs, who is allowed them, and who is not. While U.S. aid benefits Israel in a variety of ways and allows it to maintain military superiority in the region, America's deliberate silence regarding Israel's nuclear program clearly establishes its acceptance of a nuclear Israel even though that contradicts the NPT and America's position on the Middle East in general.

Punitive measures such as sanctions and embargoes are often used against countries like Iran and Iraq when they are suspected of attempting to acquire WMD capabilities. Meanwhile, Washington turns a blind eye to the nuclear arsenal of Israel (Weidi, 2002: 122).

Stephen Zunes (2002) describes U.S. hypocrisy in a more quantitative manner. While pointing to Iraq's violation of UN Security Council resolutions as justification for invading Iraq, the Bush administration has turned a blind eye to several resolutions violated by Israel: 31 to be exact. These resolution violations not only point to the special treatment Israel receives from the United States, but also the hypocrisy in targeting Iraq (Zunes totals some 91 UN resolutions being violated by a number of allies of America).

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2006) argue that the Bush administration's attempt to impose democracy in the Middle East has fostered insurgencies, facilitated a rise in oil prices and terrorist attacks, and sparked conflict in Lebanon and Gaza. They challenge that U.S. foreign policy is not based on U.S. interests, but rather on the political influence of what they call the "Israel Lobby." Mearsheimer and Walt detail the amounts of aid and assistance Israel has received from the United States and weigh it against the potential benefits that aid and assistance might provide to the United States. The authors conclude that it is simply *not* in the United States' best interest to continue to favor Israel in the manner that is has.

For instance, Israel has received more aid annually from the United States than any other country since 1976, and more total aid since World War II. The United States gives Israel one-fifth of its foreign-aid budget each year: some $3 billion, which amounts to roughly $500 per person in Israel per year. Furthermore, rather than quarterly installments, Israel receives its direct aid in a lump sum, up front every year. Moreover, Israel is not required to spend 100 percent of its military appropriations in the United States as most other recipients are required to do. Israel gets to invest 25 percent in its own defense industry. Nor does Israel have to provide the United States

with an accounting of how its aid is spent, as all other recipients do. Thus, when the direct foreign aid the United States sends to Israel is spent on illegal settlements in the West Bank, American policymakers can conveniently not be informed. In addition to all that, Israel has received some of the finest U.S. weapons, intelligence, helicopters and jets. Most importantly perhaps, the United States has played along with Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Mearsheimer and Walt also point out that while Israel was once a strategic asset to the United States during the Cold War, it also compromised America's relationship with the Arab governments in the region, and at times greatly affected oil prices (such as when the United States gave Israel $2.2 billion in military aid during the October War); making it also a strategic liability. Furthermore, the authors insist that continued support of Israel since the end of the Cold War has made Israel a "strategic burden" in the war on terror, practically guaranteeing the ability of extremists to win support against America (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006, 32). The very fact that Israel has nuclear weapons is a major reason why other states and non-state actors in the region pursue a nuclear weapons capability for themselves. Also, the claim that Israel and America share the same enemies is problematic, in that many of Israel's enemies have no contentions with the United States beyond its support of Israel. Nor does Israel behave like an ally. It has continued to betray commitments to stop the construction of settlements and to cease the practice of targeted killings. Israel has also leaked classified data to China, and regularly spies on the United States

Mearsheimer and Walt look at a number of other arguments, such as Israel the underdog, Israel the democracy, Israel the victim, and Israel the morally superior; all have come up wanting. They conclude that while the Israel Lobby is powerful and permeates a broad spectrum of U.S. foreign policy from the Palestinian problem to the war in Iraq, the good news is that it is increasingly more and more visible. That in itself could be its death knell.

The security situation in Israel is arguably terrible. Still, America's continued support of Israel against its neighbors is criticized as both increasing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and exacerbating international terrorism. In addition to the arguments made above, Bush administration supporters point to America's long history of supporting Israel in defense of continued support, while opponents argue that past policy alone is insufficient to justify America's increasing vulnerability to terrorist attacks due to its alliance with Israel and the popular support for terrorist organizations that alliance is producing in many Muslim societies.

As the scholars in this section argue, the three prevailing international relation theories fail to adequately describe, explain and predict U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. Continued support of Israel threatens U.S. interests, defies any peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and fails to represent the preferences of the American people. A new model is needed.

A New Model

Constructive sovereignty offers a new lens through which U.S.-Israeli relations may be viewed. Like constructivism, the constructive sovereignty model maintains that states are not the primary actors, their constituents are. Like realism, the constructive sovereignty model recognizes the state as the highest authority. Since states merely represent the preferences of their constituents, they will only adhere to and ultimately embed those international norms that their respective constituencies will accept. Therefore, preferences are not fixed.

U.S. foreign policy toward Israel fits this model very precisely. As history has demonstrated, the status quo as it relates to Israel has been neither purely realist, liberal nor constructivist in its approach. Yet, nearly every attempt that has been made to alter that status quo has been motivated by personal preference, and met by staunch resistance which was also generated by strong state-centric, pro-Israeli preferences.

Furthermore, rather than looking to international organizations to impose global norms from the outside in, constructive sovereignty posits that ultimately change must come from the inside out. That is to say, from each state's own constituency. The United Nations won't impose a more equitable U.S. foreign policy to the Middle East, but as Americans become more and more international in their mindset, they will become more receptive to international norms, and they will voice their acceptance of these norms both politically and especially as consumers.

There has been a growing opposition to the well-entrenched pro-Israel lobby in this country. It has taken quite some time, but it reflects the changing composition of contemporary Americans. One large obstacle that the pro-Arab lobby still faces is the highly-organized nature of groups such as AIPAC; another is that the pro-Israel lobby is so deeply embedded in the U.S. system. But as the composition, particularly among elites, becomes more balanced in this country, the model predicts that the influence of groups such as AIPAC will be tempered by more equal representation of those who oppose it.

While lobbying groups are extremely influential, there is nothing more powerful than the power of the consumer. It is therefore a central pillar of constructive sovereignty that privatization is not only the driving force behind globalization, but also that private enterprise possesses the incentive to implement those international norms reflected in the preferences of consumers (profit); even in the face of staunch opposition by powerful lobbies. Private enterprise is also the primary consumer of proprietary data used to measure the preferences of consumers, and as such remains the most up-to-date source of changing consumer preferences.

As private enterprise meets the increasingly international demands of consumers, it will itself become more international in scope. The cycle is self-perpetuating. In this way international norms are embedded and viewed with legitimacy by each state's constituency, while state sovereignty is maintained and respected.

Conclusion

Today, with hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, U.S. ships lurking in the Mediterranean and in the Persian Gulf, fresh billion-dollar arms transactions being launched in all directions, and democratically elected Islamist organizations; a theoretical model that can accurately describe, explain and predict U.S. foreign policy toward Israel would prove invaluable. This treatise has demonstrated that thus far, the three prevailing international relations theories have failed to adequately describe, explain or predict with any accuracy, the past, present and future of U.S. foreign policy toward Israel.

The constructive sovereignty model, however, offers a new theoretical lens by which we can view the slow, often tortured, progress of U.S. foreign policy toward Israel over the decades. As a descriptive model, constructive sovereignty accurately depicts a constituent-driven preference, stubbornly adhered to by a rigid bureaucracy. As an explanatory model, constructive sovereignty points to America's strong Judeo-Christian heritage, and the overwhelming influence both the media and the pro-Israel lobby have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy to this day. Yet, unlike the realist or liberal model, the constructive sovereignty model predicts that these preferences are changing with the changing composition of the American public. Finally, unlike the constructivist model, rather than looking to international organizations to impose global norms from the outside in, the constructive sovereignty model recognizes the state as the highest authority, and recognizes change as a phenomenon that progresses from the inside out.

About the Author

John Maszka is an international relations scholar and author of *Terrorism and the Bush Doctrine*.

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1. Christison (1998) is quick to point out that while this demonstrated a humanitarian concern for the Palestinians on the part of the Eisenhower administration, there was no acknowledgement of Palestinian political or national aspirations.

2. The myriad of foreign policy issues facing the Eisenhower administration, in addition to the Cold War race with the Soviet Union over influence in the region, included France's and Britain's secret military pact with Israel in reaction to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1952, France's agreement to transfer nuclear technology to Israel in 1954 (which culminated in the construction of a 24-megawatt nuclear reactor in 1958), the pan-Arab leader of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser's attempts at undermining the 1955 Baghdad Pact by aligning Egypt with Saudi Arabia, sponsoring anti-British demonstrations in Amman, and negotiating arms sales agreements between various Warsaw Pact states and Egypt and Syria. (See Yergin, 1991).

3. The Carter administration made the same mistake regarding Iran, by trusting the assurances of officials in the Shah's court, it failed to accurately access the strength of the growing opposition.

4. In truth, settlements were illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, adopted in 1949 and signed by Israel in 1951.

5. In July 2007, President Ahmadinejad allegedly approved a $1 billion arms deal between Tehran and Damascus, which included surface-to-surface missiles as well as Russian and North Korean anti-tank and anti-aircraft systems. Ahmadinejad denies the deal went through. See Mostaghim, 2007.

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